WILEY

INTERNATIONAL Reading Association

Enhancing Reading Instruction through Cinderella Tales
Author(s): M. Jo Worthy and Janet W. Bloodgood
Source: *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Dec., 1992 - Jan., 1993), pp. 290-301
Published by: Wiley on behalf of the International Reading Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20201072
Accessed: 28/06/2014 09:10

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley and *International Reading Association* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Reading Teacher*.

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

M. Jo Worthy
Janet W. Bloodgood

Enhancing reading instruction through Cinderella tales

Worthy is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Bloodgood is a doctoral student in Reading Education at the University of Virginia.

While Thomas writes and illustrates a character study, Jamie and Amani compare and contrast two versions of a similar story. Danielle finds Africa on a world map and discusses with Sammy how to find out where the rain forests are located. Marcela and Leah are busy writing a reader's theater script of their favorite book, which they will perform for the class. Meanwhile, a group of their classmates peruses reference books and *National Geographic* magazines for pictures and information about the peoples of ancient China.

These students were fifth graders in a reading class involved in a unit on fairy tales, specifically the variants of the Cinderella story. Over the past several years, we have been using a literature unit consisting of familiar versions and variants of the Cinderella stories in upper elementary classrooms and in a university-based remedial reading clinic. We have found that connecting the known stories to new, structurally similar ones is a powerful tool for reading instruction and an excellent foundation for exploring other subjects through literature.

In this article, we outline a literature unit consisting of variations of the Cinderella story for use in the upper elementary grades. We begin by presenting our rationale for studying fairy tales in general and Cinderella stories in particular. Next we describe the Cinderella stories and the activities developed to study and expand upon them. We then discuss the effectiveness of this unit in both clinical and classroom environments. We conclude with some final thoughts about the unit.

Why Cinderella?

Fairy tales are a natural choice of motivational reading material because of their inherent meaning for children. Fairy tales present a crystal clear world that is compelling to children, appealing to their sense of absolute right and wrong (Bettelheim, 1976). Purcell-Gates (1989) reports that students at a university reading clinic consistently choose fairy tales over more contemporary literature to read again and again. Fairy tales are an inspiration for learning to read because they address questions about life and human struggle, and

© International Reading Association 7055-3340/92/US$1.25+.00

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

they speak to children in personal ways. In addition, Purcell-Gates reports that her students improved in their control of syntax and vocabulary in written language. In a classroom setting, first-grade children who heard a variety of folk and fairy tales improved their writing, making use of a rich and diverse vocabulary, which included vigorous action words and sensory language (Phillips, 1986). Our clinical and classroom experiences with fairy tales have shown similar benefits for students.

Cinderella is the best known and the most copied of the fairy tales, with as many as 700 variants; almost every culture has a version (Opie & Opie, 1974). The Cinderella stories portray a universal theme—the triumph of good over evil—in a family context. In addition, these tales offer readers access to multiple levels of interpretations, enabling students to engage with the story from their own point in time and experience. As deRegniers (1976) states in the author's note to *Little Sister and the Month Brothers,* a picture book based on a Slavic Cinderella variant:

> Over the years the story has taken on more and more meaning for me, and my perception of it changes as my perception of life changes—from sentimental to romantic to poetic to ironic to faintly comic, layer upon layer.

We chose Cinderella for a fairy tale unit because there are many exquisite picture books available that depict the Cinderella story from a variety of cultures. Versions range from Karlin's fairly simple *Cinderella* (1989), illustrated with comic flair by James Marshall, to the intricate *Moss Gown* (Hooks, 1987), romantically depicted by Donald Carrick. The many Cinderella interpretations allow considerable flexibility. We used a variety of titles and possible connections, but teachers should feel free to pick and choose elements of this unit as they fit within the personalities, curricular needs, and time frame of individual classrooms (see bibliography of books and stories at the end of this article).

Will the real Cinderella please stand up?

Several features are common to most Cinderella stories: (a) a beautiful heroine who has fallen from a position of high esteem, (b) an evil parent or sibling who mistreats the heroine, (c) a magical force, and (d) recognition and restoration of the heroine to an even higher position. The major difference among stories is the identity of the antagonist who causes Cinderella to lose her original status (Bettelheim, 1976). Our view of Cinderella goes well beyond the traditional American Cinderella—the gentle, forgiving girl who waits passively for her handsome prince (Yolen, 1977)—to encompass the more robust, realistic heroines known in other cultures. After several years of using picture books based on international Cinderella variants informally in a university reading clinic and in elementary classrooms, we devised a unit based on a three-category scheme that

Fairy tales are a natural choice of motivational reading material because of their inherent meaning for children. Photo by Robert Finken

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Cinderella stories grouped by antagonists

Category one: Heroine mistreated by stepmother or stepsisters
Walt Disney's Cinderella (1974)
Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper (Brown, 1954)
"The Cinder Maid" (Jacobs, 1916)
Little Sister and the Month Brothers (deRegniers, 1976)
Yeh Shen (Louie, 1982)
Nomi and the Magic Fish (Phumla, 1972)
Cinderella (Karlin, 1989)

Category two: Sibling rivalry
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters (Steptoe, 1987)
"Makanda Mahlanu" (Sherman, 1990)
The Talking Eggs (San Souci, 1989)
Prince Cinders (Cole, 1988)
Ugh (Yorinks, 1990)

Category three: Daughter flees unnatural or misunderstanding father
"Allerleirauh" (Lang, 1892/1978)
Princess Furball (Huck, 1989)
"Cap o' Rushes" (Minard, 1975)
Moss Gown (Hooks, 1987)

distinguishes the stories by their antagonists (see the Table for titles by category).

Category one: Heroine mistreated by stepmother or stepsisters

The first category includes stories in which the heroine's mother dies and Cinderella is left in the care of a cruel stepmother or stepsisters. American children are most familiar with *Walt Disney's Cinderella* (1974), which is patterned after the story "prettified" by the French author Perrault. *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper* (Brown, 1954), translated from Perrault's original tale, contains very ornate illustrations, reminiscent of the period in which Perrault told his story. This version includes a gentle, forgiving heroine and a happy ending for all of the characters.

A translation from the Grimm Brothers' version ("The Cinder Maid," Jacobs, 1916) provides a stark contrast to Perrault's story, including many gory details reminiscent of other early European versions. In the Grimm version, one stepsister cuts off her toes to try to fit in the slipper, and the other cuts off her heel. In the end they are punished severely for their wickedness.

Little Sister and the Month Brothers (deRegniers, 1976) stems from the Slavic tradition of the Cinderella tale where a wicked stepmother and stepsister send sweet, hard-working Little Sister into the mountains in the middle of winter to find violets. She is aided by the 12 magical Month Brothers, who provide for her needs and wreak vengeance on her tormentors.

Most sources agree that the earliest recorded version of Cinderella is the story of Yeh-hsien (Waley, cited in Opie & Opie, 1974). A good example of this version is *Yeh Shen* (Louie, 1982), which is illustrated with authentic oriental flavor by Ed Young. Yeh Shen finds solace from the trials of her life with her stepmother and stepsister in her companionship with an enormous magical fish. Even after the wicked stepmother kills the fish, its bones provide Yeh Shen with beautiful clothes and the opportunity to marry the king. As in the Grimm version, the antagonists are punished—killed by a shower of flying stones—for their wicked treatment of the heroine. A fish also serves a pivotal role in an African version entitled *Nomi and the Magic Fish* (Phumla, 1972). This story particularly intrigued our students because it was written by a 15-year-old Fingo Zulu girl.

Category two: Sibling rivalry

The second category of Cinderella stories includes two beautiful daughters, one humble and kind, the other jealous and cruel. A prime example is Steptoe's (1987) enchanting *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters,* a story set in ancient Zimbabwe involving two sisters who want to marry a king. The inclusion of two

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

daughters who are similar in beauty but different in spirit sends the refreshing message that character is more important than appearance. "Makanda Mahlanu" (Sherman, 1990) is a similar tale from the Bantu culture.

San Souci's *The Talking Eggs* (1989), an adaptation of a Creole folktale, mixes the characters and motifs of the African versions with the language of the American South:

> Rose, the older sister, was cross and mean and didn't know beans from birds' eggs. Blanche was sweet and kind and sharp as forty crickets. But their mother liked Rose the best, because they were alike as two peas in a pod—bad-tempered, sharp-tongued, and always putting on airs. (p. 1).

Category three: Daughter flees unnatural or misunderstanding father

The third category represents quite a divergence from the first two, and the plots of these stories are more complex. An archetype is "Allerleirauh; or the Many-Furred Creature" (Lang 1892/1978). The beautiful heroine's father presents her with an unnatural proposal: She must marry him. Horrified, she attempts to put him off by asking him for seemingly impossible gifts. When he fulfills her requests, she flees to another kingdom, her beauty and station disguised by her coat of a thousand furs, where she lives in poverty and is put to work in the king's kitchen. With the help of the impossible gifts, she wins the king's love. Huck's *Princess Furball* (1989), illustrated by Anita Lobel, bears a close resemblance to this story.

Another "father as antagonist" story is "Cap o' Rushes" (Minard, 1975), an English tale reminiscent of King Lear, in which the father of three girls asks them how much they love him. The youngest daughter, whose love is actually strongest, tells him that she loves him "more than meat loves salt." The father misunderstands this declaration of true love and he sends her away. The rest of the story is similar to "Allerleirauh." Hooks's *Moss Gown* (1987) is a Southern American version of "Cap o' Rushes."

A Cinderella unit for the elementary grades

We devised the Cinderella unit for use with elementary and middle school students in a reading clinic, and we also supervised the use of the unit in several third- to fifth-grade classrooms. Typically the unit was initiated by having students tell the Cinderella story as they knew it. Their versions were invariably patterned after the Disney movie or book, and we continued by reading the storybook version that was most like their oral story, Brown's (1954) *Cinderella.* Students also read several of the books in the "stepmother as antagonist" category in pairs or, when necessary, listened to them on tape. They completed instructional activities in cooperative learning groups, choosing from several we had demonstrated, and then they presented their work to the class. This procedure was repeated for the other two categories.

For the sake of this discussion, we have organized the instructional activities for the unit into two sections, although there was some overlap. The first, prereading activities, prepared students for reading the story through purpose setting and instruction in word recognition, vocabulary, and background information. The second set of activities was used as either during-reading or postreading instruction or both and consisted of in-process vocabulary and story structure activities, literary evaluation, and written response. Students were also given independent time to develop their own creative responses to the stories.

Since the stories and language of common fairy tales are familiar and predictable for most students, they found the books in the unit easier to read and comprehend than many other texts written at about the same difficulty level.

Prereading instruction

Since the stories and language of common fairy tales are familiar and predictable for most students, they found the books in the unit easier to read and comprehend than many other texts written at about the same difficulty level. Thus, it was often not necessary to address word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or background knowledge separately. We were

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Figure 1
Story structure chart for comparing different versions

Cinderella Story Structure Chart

Title	Cinderella	Cinderella	Cinderella	Yeh-shen
Country	U. S. A.	France	Germany	China
Author	Told from memory by McGuffey students	Marcia Brown	The Brothers Grimm	Retold by Ai-Ling Louie
Illustrator	none	Same	?	Ed Young
Setting	Long ago and far away	Long ago in a far away kingdom	Long ago Kingdom	In the dim past in the caves in china
Characters (describe) Put a star by the "bad guy"	Cinderella - nice and beautiful *Stepsisters - mean and ugly *Stepmother - mean Prince Fairy Godmother birds and animals	← same same there were not animals	cinderella - nice, pretty *stepmother *stepsisters - mean The prince her father. He was being mean to his daughter Cinderella	Yeh Shen Orphan, Bright, Lovely *Stepmother and *Stepsister - mean and jealous Father - he died Fish - he helped Yeh Shen The King - he married Yeh Shen
Events (plot)	①Cinderella wanted to go to the ball but she couldn't. ②Fairy Godmother came and dressed her for the ball with her magic wand. ③She went to the ball and lost her slipper. ④The prince took the slipper and tried to find the girl who fits it. ⑤The prince found Cinderella and they got married.	← Same She went to ball twice. The second time she turned back to rags because she was late. ←same same ←Cinderella forgave her stepsisters and married them to lords of the court	The stepsisters are making Cinderella do all the work. She couldn't go to the ball. The birds helped her. They threw down the dress. She went to the ball 3 times and lost her slipper. The prince looked for the girl who fit the slipper. At the end they got married.	Yeh Shen's stepmother killed her fish. The fish bones helped her. She wanted to go to the dance. The bones gave her a dress and slippers. She lost one of her slippers. That's why her clothes turned in to rags. the king tried to look for who the slipper belongs to. He found Yeh shen and they got maried. Her mother and sister got killed by a shower of flying stones.
Magic	Fairy Godmother - magic wand	← same	the tree and the bird. they didn't have the fairy godmother.	she found her dress. the fish gave it to her - bones
Other Important Parts of the Story	Birds also helped make her dress	Pumpkin turned into a coach Mice → horses Rat → coachmen Lizards → footmans She forgave her sisters	The stepsisters were punished and blind. They cut their feet so they could fit in the slipper. The father was in the story. She went to the ball 3 times. It was gory.	There were a shower of flying stones coming to them - that killed the stepmother and stepsisters

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

careful to preview every book, however, and to anticipate possible problems and provide specific instruction when it was needed. We used the students' knowledge of fairy tales to provide a provisional structure from which to predict the events of new stories. When potentially unfamiliar concepts and vocabulary were identified, we pointed them out before reading the story, drawing relationships through discussion or the use of semantic maps (Johnson & Pearson, 1984).

During reading and postreading instruction

Vocabulary from context. Many opportunities to demonstrate the use of context clues in identifying vocabulary came up during the reading of the stories. For example, when reading *Nomi and the Magic Fish,* we encountered *veld.* We made hypotheses about its meaning using context clues, and we had to fight each other to get to the dictionary to verify our hypotheses.

Story structure. We used a repertoire of activities that addressed comprehension by analyzing story structure. We began by identifying the basic story elements, and then we studied details of plot and characterization. We typically demonstrated new activities or strategies in whole class minilessons and then encouraged the students to use them when appropriate.

To record and compare the elements of the stories in the unit, we used large story structure charts like the one shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Newman, 1989). This chart, used to record and compare each version as it was read, helped students to see similarities and differences at a glance. Identifying the typical story structure elements helped our students to monitor their comprehension. For example, after reading several stories, one of the students pointed out that something magical had occurred in all of the versions she had read. Thus, we added a "magic" category to our chart, and she reviewed the stories she had already read, charting the particular sources of magic. We continued to add categories as students noticed other commonalities among the stories.

We used other graphic organizers such as the Venn diagram to compare and contrast story elements (see Bromley, 1991, for others). Tanya, a fourth-grade clinic student whose comprehension was assessed at a first-grade level, compared the similar African tales *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987) and "Makanda Mahlanu" (Sherman, 1990) (see Figure 2). In her contrast, she attended to all of the features of story structure, noting names of characters and disparity in plot elements. The similarities she noticed included the common setting and character traits of the sisters, as well as less obvious features such as common magical elements and the daughters' dresses as they were shown in the illustrations. The activity addressed Tanya's weakness in comprehension by helping her grasp the subtle differences between the stories.

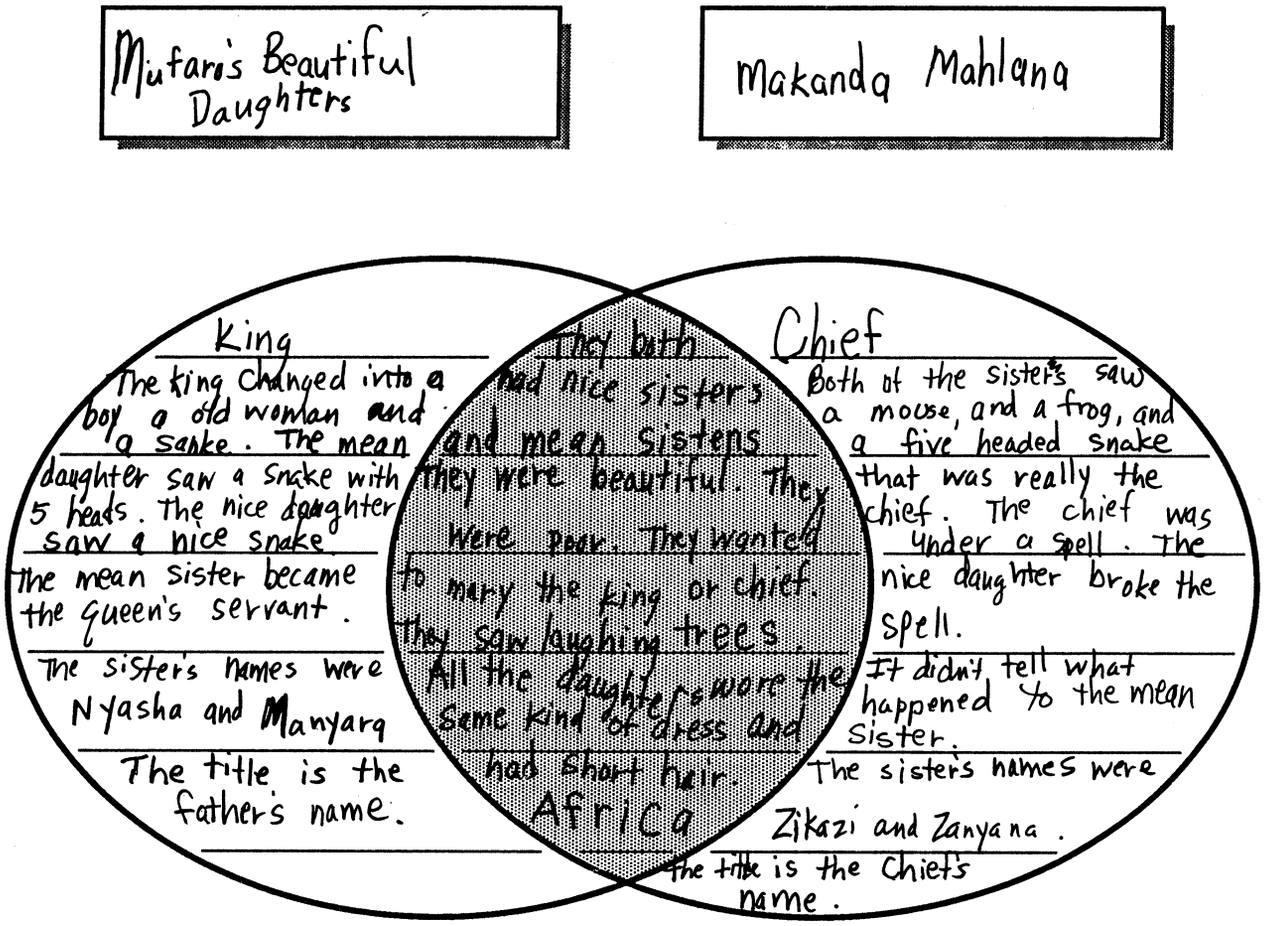
We used various graphic organizers to map major plot events. Representing story events either through illustrations or written summaries made the idea of plot more concrete for our students and strengthened their comprehension. For example, Denise's sequence chart for *Moss Gown* (see Figure 3) clearly indicates comprehension of the story through her ability to pick out the major story events.

In many fairy tales, the characters are presented as either good or evil, pretty or ugly, hardworking or lazy. As we learned through our study of characterization, however, the Cinderella heroines are often complex, their traits running the gamut from generous and kind to clever and resourceful to even vengeful. In minilessons we discussed how the author developed the Cinderella characters, either directly or implicitly through their actions, and we used a variety of character webs (Bromley, 1991; Cullinan, 1987). *Moss Gown* (Hooks, 1987) is a good book for in-depth character analysis because the language is very descriptive. A character flow chart (McTighe & Lyman, 1988), which graphically illustrates how characters' qualities can be inferred from their actions, worked well for Hooks's story. Two students focused their attention on Candace, the compassionate heroine of the story, while another pair of students studied the *gris gris* woman, "a slender green-eyed witch woman, black and sleek as a velvet cat" (Hooks, 1987, p. 16).

After reading several books, we examined the roles and traits of other Cinderella story characters and how they differed among versions. One such character study was spurred by a student's observation of the father in the Grimm Brothers' version. In most "stepmother

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Figure 2
Venn diagram for comparison and contrast of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* and "Makanda Mahlanu"


Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters
Makanda Mahlana
King
The king changed into a boy a old woman and a sanke. The mean daughter saw a snake with 5 heads. The nice daughter saw a nice snake
the mean sister became the queen's servant.
The sister's names were Nyasha and Manyara
The title is the father's name.
They both had nice sisters and mean sistens they were beautiful. They were poor. They wanted to mary the king or chief. They saw laughing trees. All the daughters wore the same kind of dress and had short hair. AfriCa
Chief
Both of the sisters saw a mouse, and a frog, and a five headed snake that was really the chief. The chief was under a spell. The nice daughter broke the spell.
It didn't tell what happened to the mean sister.
The sisters names were Zikazi and Zanyana.
the title is the Chiefs name.

as antagonist" stories, the heroine's father dies soon after marrying the stepmother, but the Grimms' father is still alive. An entry in the student's journal showed his concern over the father's ineffectual behavior: "Why does he let [the stepmother and stepsisters] be so mean to her?" In his study, he found some fathers who were better (e.g., *Mufaro*) and some who were even worse (the incestuous father in "Allerleirauh," Lang, 1892/1978).

Literary evaluation. After identifying and analyzing the story structure, plot details, and characterization of several stories, our students became adept at observing and discussing similarities and differences and were ready to begin examining books critically. We introduced several aspects of literary evaluation in minilessons, asking them to consider questions such as: Does the book tell a good story? How does the author portray the characters? What role does setting play in the story? How does the theme emerge from the story? Does the author use dialogue effectively? Do the illustrations add to the telling of the tale, and are they authentic to the country of origin? (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987, pp. 28-29). We also identified in the stories distinctive stylistic features of fairy tales, including common language ("once upon a time," "happily ever after"), themes (goodness is rewarded, wickedness is punished) and motifs (impossible gifts, supernatural elements, disguises, events happening in threes).

Since most of the books in the unit were picture books, we examined illustrations in detail. Illustrations can add much to a text by

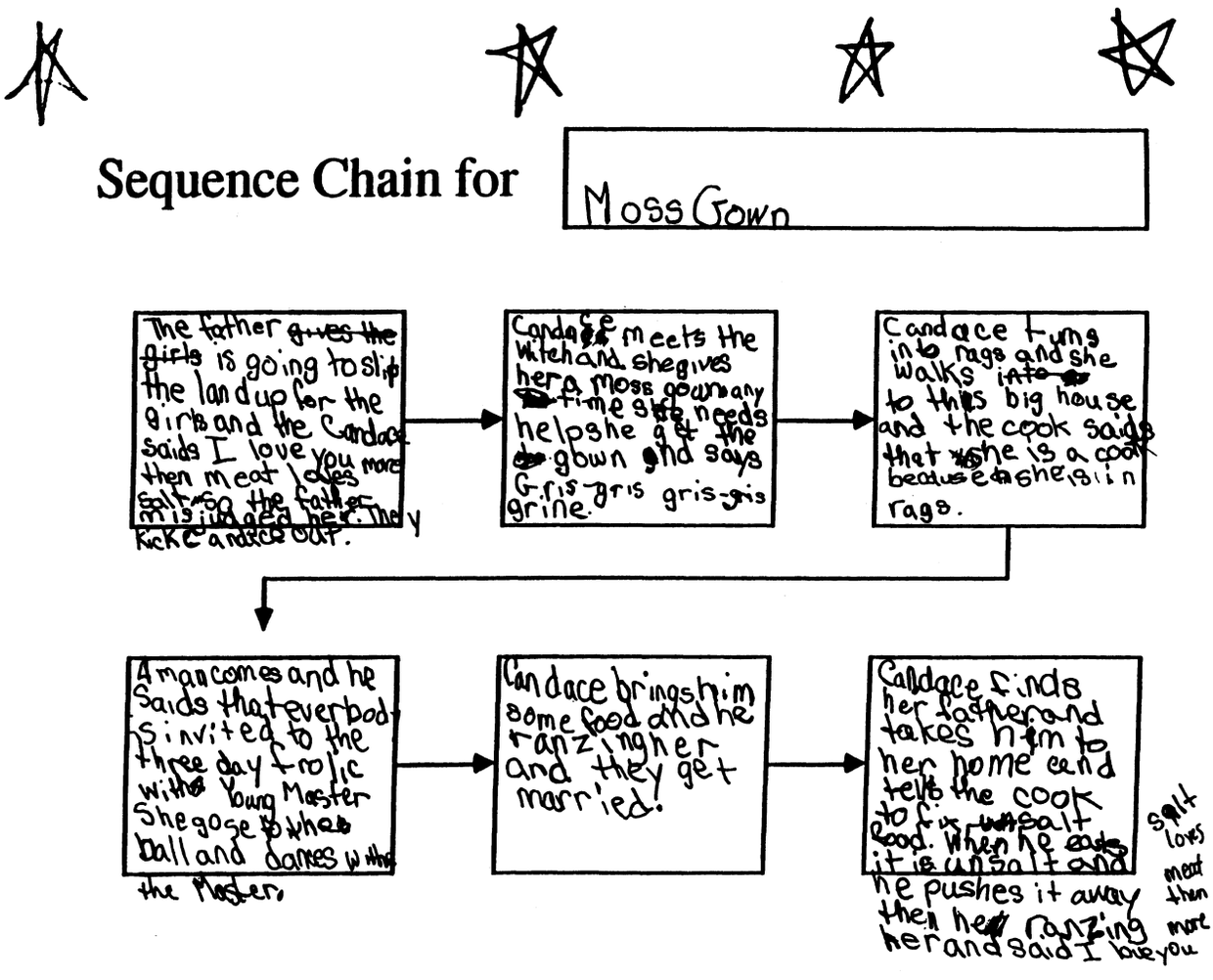
This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

giving additional information and deeper insight into the story through the illustrator's interpretations. Children are much more likely than adults to inspect illustrations and to find meaning and connection to the text in them (Mikkelsen & Mikkelsen, 1987). Tanya's attention to the girls' garments in her Venn diagram (see Figure 2) is an apt example. Also, as the story structure chart grew (see Figure 1), students added their interpretive comments based on their evaluations of illustrations in the books.

Another aspect of literary criticism that evolved spontaneously was illustrator and author studies. Ed Young's splendid illustrations for *Yeh Shen* (Louie, 1982) led several fourth graders to study his illustrations of other Chinese folktales (e.g., *8,000 Stones,* Wolkstein, 1972; *The Emperor and the Kite,* Yolen, 1967) and folktales from other cultures (e.g., *Foolish Rabbit's Big Mistake,* Martin, 1985; *Bo Rabbit Smart for True,* Jacquith, 1981). Young (1989) also wrote and illustrated *Lon Po Po,* a Caldecott Award winning book based on the Chinese version of Red Riding Hood. The students' report to the class included an examination of the common themes, motifs, and illustrations in Chinese folktales.

Written response. Writing was an integral part of the unit. Students kept response journals to record their thoughts about stories before, during, and after reading them. At first

Figure 3
Story sequence chart


Sequence Chain for
Moss Gown
The father gives the girls is going to slip the land up for the girls and the Candace saids I love you more then meat loves salt so the father misjudged her. They kicke candace out.
Candace meets the kitchand she gives her a moss gown any time she needs helpshe get the gown and says Gris gris gris gris grine.
Candace turns into rags and she walks into to this big house and the cook saids that she is a cook because she is in rags.
A man comes and he Saids that everbody is invited to the three day frolic with the young Master She goes to the ball and dances with the Master.
Candace brings him some food and he ranzing her and they get marr'ied.
Calldace finds her father and takes him to her home and tells the cook to fix unsalt food. When he eats it is unsalt and he pushes it away then he ranzing her and said I love you
salt loves meat then more

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

their responses consisted of plot summaries, predictions of story events, and answers to teacher-posed questions about their reactions to the stories. Gradually they began to comment on some of the content of the minilessons on plot development, character analysis, and evaluation, and they added their personal feelings and thoughts. While many of the initial writing activities were fairly structured, students assumed greater responsibility and control of the tasks as the unit progressed.

Students engaged in other written responses. For example, to help students synthesize what they had learned about the characters in Cinderella stories, we modeled cinquain, a form of five-line poetry, and students wrote about individual characters or character types. Falisha's cinquain about stepmothers is shown below, along with a description of the form:

Stepmother	One word title
Ugly, mean	Two word description
Bossing, ordering, teasing	Three action *-ing* words
Jealous of all beauty	Four words describing a feeling
Cruel	One word synonym or description

Other writing involved transforming existing stories or writing new ones based on features of fairy tales. We found that using the support of an existing work gives students a comfortable structure from which to write (Otten & Stelmach, 1988). Thus, we modeled the writing of reader's theater scripts, keeping the story structure constant while changing the format and some of the language. Students worked in groups to write their own scripts to perform for the class. We moved beyond these simple adaptations to transformations, following Otten and Stelmach's suggestions. Simple transformations, changing or extending one or more story elements, were easy for our students because they had become so familiar with the elements. Some students added new characters or developed minor ones, rewrote the stories from a different point of view, changed the gender of one or more characters, wrote "where are they now" versions, or changed the endings. Others changed the setting, narrator, or style or rewrote the story as a joke, poem, novel, or song. A fifth grader, shocked that many of the versions ended with the violent deaths of the stepsisters, rewrote the ending of *Yeh Shen* in the style of Perrault, with the heroine forgiving her sisters and marrying them to her husband's brothers. Tara, a sixth grader with a history of resistance to writing, wrote a more complex transformation. Taking a different point of view, she portrayed an evil "Cindy" from the stepmother's perspective. "Part One" of her story is a narrative that sets the scene and the relationships among characters:

> Cindy, or Cinderella, as she liked to be called was evil and tried to make life for my family miserable...Sure, her father punished her, but only by making her do odd chores around the house.

"Part Two," written in verse, relates the events of the ball, how Cindy gets married, and the resolution of the story:

> After the two married,
> One thing all of us knew;
> Without that evil Cindy
> Happy endings do come true!

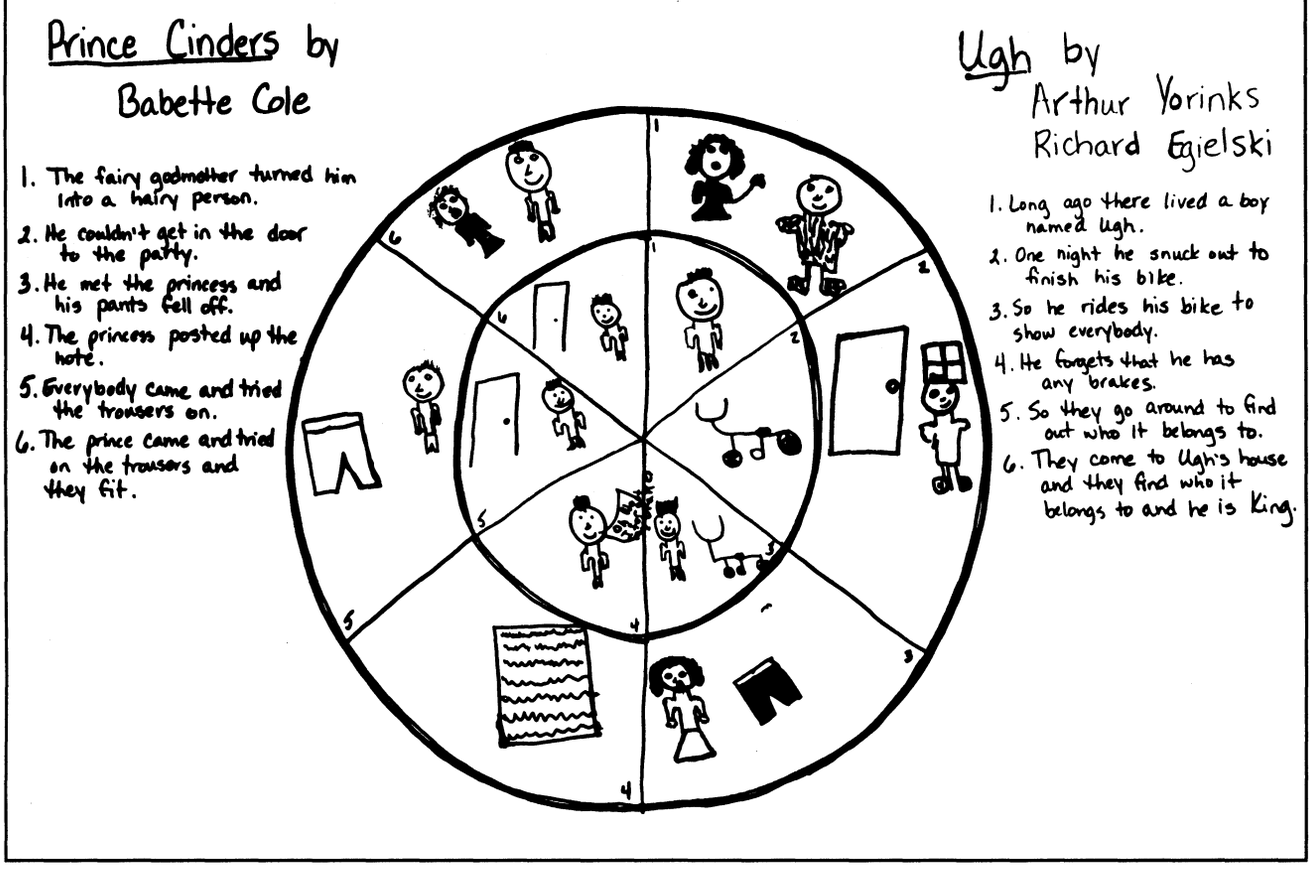
Humorous Cinderella stories. After weeks of study, our students had become experts at recognizing the distinctive features of Cinderella stories and characters. We then shared two humorous picture books. *Ugh,* by the author/illustrator team of Yorinks and Egielksi (1990), is set in prehistoric time with a cave boy as the Cinderella figure. In *Prince Cinders,* written and illustrated by Cole (1988), a skinny, weakling prince marries a princess whom he meets on the way to the disco.

Students worked in small groups to compose their own creative responses to the humorous versions. Michael and J.P. devised a circle graphic with illustrations to compare parallel plot features of *Ugh* and *Prince Cinders* (see Figure 4). Other students were inspired by these versions to write and illustrate their own stories. Tanya used pictures of rock stars from a teen magazine to illustrate her story about a family of four girls, all Cinderella figures, whose mean brother overworks them and forbids them to go to the dance at the local junior high school. Terrence told the story of "Prince Dude," a very colorful character:

> There's a dance on Friday—Prince Dude needs to find himself a wife. He tells every maiden in the kingdom to dress up as a punk rocker. Prince Dude comes to the dance in a black robe with spikes that are colored purple with rubies on them...the Prince's crown sits on the tiny little spikes on his head; his purple mohawk is in a ponytail that comes up through the crown.

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Figure 4
Circle graphic designed by students to compare the plots of *Ugh* and *Prince Cinders*


Prince Cinders by
Babette Cole
1. The fairy godmother turned him into a hairy person.
2. He couldn't get in the door to the party.
3. He met the princess and his pants fell off.
4. The princess posted up the note.
5. Everybody came and tried the trousers on.
6. The prince came and tried on the trousers and they fit.
Ugh by
Arthur Yorinks
Richard Egielski
1. Long ago there lived a boy named Ugh.
2. One night he snuck out to finish his bike.
3. So he rides his bike to show everybody.
4. He forgets that he has any brakes.
5. So they go around to find out who it belongs to.
6. They come to Ugh's house and they find who it belongs to and he is King.

Across the curriculum

The Cinderella unit led to side studies in other disciplines. One activity provided a foundation for studying other countries and cultures. After locating each story's country of origin on a large world map, the students used a piece of colored yarn to connect the country with a card containing bibliographic data. With the setting descriptions from the stories as a foundation, we explored the regions of which the stories were typical. Other natural extensions were history (What events took place when this story was written?) and anthropology (What does this story say about the people who lived during that time?). These whole-group explorations led to more in-depth related studies.

From reading several African versions of Cinderella and from brief trips to the encyclopedia, we were able to get a sense of the diversity of the African continent, its languages, peoples, and topography, from the lush vegetation in the rain forest of ancient Zimbabwe in *Mufaro* to the open plains of South Africa in *Nomi*. Many students were interested in studying these and other aspects of Africa. Other topics they explored included history, religions, arts and music, and literature. Individuals and cooperative learning groups read and studied in their areas of interest and shared their findings with the class. Noting that the brides in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987) and "Makanda Mahlanu" (Sherman, 1990) prepared wedding cakes from millet, one fifth-grade group read an article about millet (Nasseri, 1990) and researched other African foods.

Another side study focused on the role of magic in Southern African American culture. Several fifth-grade students explored the role of *gris gris* (conjure women), other spiritual forces, and their integral role in stories such as San Souci's *The Boy and the Ghost* (1989) and Hooks's *Moss Gown* (1987) and *The Bal-*

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

lad of Belle Dorcas (1990). Comparing the magic elements in the African tales with these forces of potential good and evil as seen in the Southern stories allowed the students to make connections between cultures.

Program effectiveness

Many benefits of the Cinderella course of study were apparent in students' reading and writing as seen in both our observations and informal assessments. The student responses throughout this article are examples of the growth that we saw in comprehension, critical analysis and evaluation, and writing. They became increasingly independent and enthusiastic in responding to the stories in personal, unique ways. Tara's use of both prose and poetry in telling her story from a different point of view, Terrence's vivid description of Prince Dude, and Michael and J.P.'s graphic plot comparison are just a few examples of the ways that students demonstrated growth in literacy. Students' independence and creativity were also seen in the many side studies that developed in response to the stories.

Many benefits of the Cinderella course of study were apparent in students' reading and writing as seen in both our observations and informal assessments.

Another exciting outcome, particularly for the clinic students, was reflected in their attitude toward reading. Students who earlier in the year would have done anything to avoid books began to read Cinderella and other fairy tales that they had discovered in the library, and they clamored to share their insights with the group. This enthusiasm carried over into their school classrooms; several of the classroom teachers of our clinic students asked us if they could use the unit after witnessing the reactions of these previously reluctant readers. One such teacher confided, "I was shocked to see him [the clinic student] actually reading a book in his free time."

Another teacher who used the unit commented that exploring variations of a story across cultures "was a tremendous help with comprehension," and she used the strategy with other themes. This same teacher, who had previously been reluctant to try cooperative learning groups, became convinced of their effectiveness after seeing one of her "lowest readers" leading a discussion during the Cinderella unit.

All of the clinic students made qualitative and quantitative gains in comprehension during the semester in which the Cinderella unit was used. For example, Denise entered the clinic as a fourth grader with weak comprehension of grade level material (60% of the comprehension questions correct on the fourth-grade level passage of an informal reading inventory), tending to focus on literal, surface content. Denise made marked gains in comprehension during the 10-week session in which the Cinderella unit was the major vehicle of instruction. She demonstrated increasingly effective strategies for dealing with narrative text, and her growth in vocabulary and use of background knowledge were evident in qualitative analyses of her instructional sessions. This progress was also reflected in her increasingly positive attitude toward reading and in carry-over to other reading. A unit on prairie settlers followed the Cinderella exploration, and Denise read and understood books that would have previously been difficult for her to read independently (e.g., *Little House on the Prairie,* Wilder, 1935; *The Josefina Story Quilt,* Coerr, 1986). Further, when Denise's reading was evaluated at the end of the session, she demonstrated increased comprehension (80% of the comprehension questions correct on the fifth-grade IRI passage).

Conclusion

The immediacy and universal appeal of fairy tales and the Cinderella theme proved a natural way to involve students in the language arts as well as in broader areas of the curriculum. Our experiences convinced us that providing students with thoughtfully chosen literature and a variety of response alternatives can play a valuable role in a language arts program that is dedicated to making reading and writing meaningful, exciting, and relevant to students.

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

The authors gratefully acknowledge the comments and suggestions of Karen Broaddus and Isabel Beck.

References

Bettelheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales.* New York: Knopf.

Bromley, K.D. (1991). *Webbing with literature.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Cullinan, B. (1987). *Children's literature in the reading program.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Huck, C.S., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1987). *Children's literature in the elementary school* (4th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Johnson, D.D., & Pearson, P.D. (1984). *Teaching reading vocabulary* (2nd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

McTighe, J., & Lyman, F.T. (1988). Cueing thinking in the classroom: The promise of theory-embedded tools. *Educational Leadership, 45*(7), 18-24.

Mikkelsen, N., & Mikkelsen, V. (1987). *Beyond the ABC: Toward a rhetoric of children's literature and reading.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 294 154)

Newman, J.M. (1989). Online: The flexible page. *Language Arts, 66*(4), 457-464.

Opie, I., & Opie, P. (1974). *The classic fairy tales.* London: Oxford University Press.

Otten, N., & Stelmach, M. (1988). Changing the story that we all know (creative reading/creative writing). *English Journal, 77*(6), 67-68.

Phillips, L.M. (1986). *Using children's literature to foster written language development.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 276 027)

Purcell-Gates, V. (1989). Fairy tales in the clinic: Children seek their own meanings. *Children's Literature in Education, 20*(4), 249-254.

Yolen, J. (1977). America's Cinderella. *Children's Literature in Education, 8*(1), 21-29.

Children's books and stories cited

Brown, M. (1954). *Cinderella, or the little glass slipper.* New York: Macmillan.

Coerr, E. (1986). *The Josefina story quilt.* New York: Harper.

Cole, B. (1988). *Prince Cinders.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

deRegniers, B.S. (1976). *Little Sister and the Month Brothers.* New York: Clarion.

Hooks, W. (1987). *Moss gown.* New York: Clarion.

Hooks, W. (1990). *The ballad of Belle Dorcas.* New York: Knopf.

Huck, C. (1989). *Princess Furball.* New York: Greenwillow.

Jacobs, J. (1916). The Cinder Maid (Grimm Brothers' version). *European folk and fairy tales.* New York: Putnam.

Jacquith, P. (1981). *Bo Rabbit smart for true: Folktales from the Gullah.* New York: Philomel.

Karlin, B. (1989). *Cinderella.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Lang, A. (1892, revised 1978). Allerleirauh; or the many-furred creature. *The green fairy book.* New York: Viking Press.

Louie, A. (1982). *Yeh Shen: A Cinderella story from China.* New York: Philomel.

Martin, R. (1985). *Foolish rabbit's big mistake.* New York: Putnam.

Minard, R. (1975). Cap o' rushes (Jacobs's version). *Womenfolk and fairy tales.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Nasseri, E.S. (1990). They have never tasted bread. *Cricket, 17*(6), 11-13.

Phumla. (1972). *Nomi and the magic fish.* New York: Doubleday.

San Souci, R.D. (1989). *The talking eggs: A folktale from the American South.* New York: Dial.

San Souci, R.D. (1989). *The boy and the ghost.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Sherman, J. (1990). Makanda Mahlanu: A Bantu folk tale. *Cricket, 17*(6), 5-9.

Steptoe, J. (1987). *Mufaro's beautiful daughters: An African tale.* New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

Walt Disney's Cinderella. (1974). New York: Random House.

Wilder, L.I. (1935). *Little house on the prairie.* New York: Harper.

Wolkstein, D. (1972). *8,000 stones.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Yolen, J. (1967). *The emperor and the kite.* Cleveland, OH: World.

Yorinks, A. (1990). *Ugh.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Young, E. (1989). *Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood story from China.* New York: Philomel.

This content downloaded from 91.238.114.72 on Sat, 28 Jun 2014 09:10:12 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions